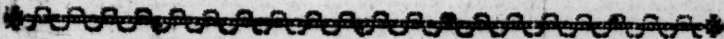
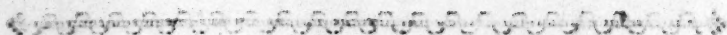


Mr. Coffin's

S E R M O N.





Mr. Coffin's



The Excellency of the Christian Ministry.

A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. EBENEZER COFFIN,

TO THE

MINISTERIAL OFFICE, IN

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AT

BRUNSWICK,

JAN. 23, 1794.

BY PAUL COFFIN, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN RUXTON.

NEWBURYPORT.

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M,DCC,XCIV.

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A

DISCOURS

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE



Jan 22 1753

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A DISCOURSE, &c.

1 TIMOTHY. III, 1.

THIS IS A TRUE SAYING, IF A MAN DESIRE THE
OFFICE OF A BISHOP, HE DESIRETH A GOOD
WORK.

THE word translated "Office of a Bishop," signifies *any* place of oversight or superintendence. But the connexion limits that of our text, and points us to the care and duty of a Christian Bishop. Our translators have therefore done well. And if we consider the nature of the thing, and the raised esteem which the Apostle had of the Christian ministry, we shall be apt to think there is in the text, a *Meiosis*. The matter is worthy of language more exalted and expressive. The following sense of the text, I conceive, is not too nervous. "This is a faithful saying, and strictly just, if a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a very good work, an employment truly worthy and excellent; and of the highest moment." We may do well on this sweet and solemn occasion, to observe, agreeably to the text,

I. THAT the department in the church, in which the christian Bishop acts, is full of labour, calling for constant attention and vigorous exertion.

II. THAT it is as excellent, honorable and important, as it is laborious.—Whence it follows,

III. THAT he, who truly desires such a station and employment, is truly a worthy man, an exalted character.

COULD

COULD I do the subject justice, I might promise my hearers, for their profound attention, an ample recompence.

1. THE department in the church of CHRIST, in which the christian Bishop acts, is full of labour, calling for constant attention and vigorous exertion.

I HAVE no need to tell judicious hearers, that these labours are not to properly those of the hands and of the body, as of the mind and heart. It is an abomination, both in the eye of reason and of revelation, for a christian Bishop to "be entangled with the affairs of this life." Nothing but necessity will justify him, in such a situation. And when the Levites and the singers flee every one to his field, and neglect their proper duties, driven by compulsive want, the sacrilegious detainers of their portions are enemies to God and their own souls; and reserve to themselves, not a blessing, but a fearful curse.

SEPARATED from secular employments, and the labors of the body, the servants of the sanctuary should diligently exercise their *moral* and *intellectual* powers. Otherwise, they will never accomplish the "good work" assigned them.

THE very preparation for the work of the Christian ministry demands much *mental* labour. "Much study is a weariness to the flesh;" and therefore, many rush into the ministry without it. Nevertheless, he that would be a man of God *approved*, must sustain it. The languages in which the holy scriptures are written, should be understood by the ministers of Christ. But this is an acquisition, which a slothful soul will never possess. For, it cannot be obtained without much study. A considerable acquaintance with *Sacred History* is a valuable attainment in a Bishop. And he must spend much time in sedulous application of mind, if he would gain the useful knowledge of the *characters* of the various inspired writers, of the *times* in which they lived, of the *usages* and *customs* to which they refer, of the *phraseology* of sacred writ,

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writ, and of the admirable *harmony* and *uniformity* of design which run through the books of inspiration. And without a good degree of this knowledge, he never can be a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed. And a large course of study is generally necessary to enable a man to see fully the *sense* of Sacred Writ; and to rise above their misery, who rest, knowing only the *words*. This is very unhappy. And when men of this character attempt to teach others, Oh! how do they "wrest the scriptures!" laying mighty stress on light matters; passing over the most important; leaving their hearers untaught and perverted!

LET the Christian Bishop be a Scribe, of whom we may say, He is instructed in the *things* of the kingdom of God!

AND the moral qualifications of the Christian Bishop may require as much labour, as his intellectual. If we will truly learn these from the Sacred Books, we shall never believe a man can obtain them without vast *Self-Denial*, and a long and prayerful course of *obedience* to God. "A Bishop must be blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient; not a brawler, not covetous, not soon angry, a lover of good men, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word." If a man shall be so sober, righteous and godly, and so crucified in his affections and lusts, and so advanced in the Christian temper, even after many humble and pious efforts, and under the grace of Heaven too, we must believe he is not a dull scholar, not a slothful Christian. Indeed he hath profited above many of his equals.

AND, if the *preparation* for the service of the sanctuary cost so much, what will the service itself amount to! Is it, indeed, a little thing for one to "take heed to himself," that his whole conduct becomes the gospel, and the elevated station of a Bishop; and also "to feed the church of God" with the sincere milk
of

of the word? Here is ample room for laborious study, and ardent supplication. For, "who is sufficient for these things?" Is it an easy thing to give a clear, satisfactory, and practical view of the scheme of our redemption through the Son of God's love? And yet this is of the last importance. The Christian Pastor must feed the sheep with this food; which the scriptures alone afford. *Natural*, or *essential Religion*, though glorious in itself, and the complacency of angels, is too strong meat for the *sickly* sons of *Adam*. However they may bear it, in connexion with the healing grace of Jesus, they cannot receive it alone. The gospel only heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, and deliverance to the captives. The Christian Bishop must convince men, that they are sinners, needing redemption in both parts of it, pardon of sin, and renovation of nature; and that Christ is; accordingly, their righteousness and strength. These things, he must never separate. The gospel, bringing salvation, always teaches repentance as well as faith, as necessary to the full possession of it. He that will make a religion of faith without repentance, or of repentance without faith, separates what God hath joined; and must expect for himself a separation from the sheep, another day. To teach, explain, and inculcate these graces, or these duties, in their large and comprehensive sense, is the peculiar and principal business of a Christian Bishop, as a teacher in Christ's school. The means to be used, which under grace lead to them, their real and true nature, and their genuine effects, will claim his time, his attention, and his diligence.

AND while he lays before his hearers all the motives of life and death, to persuade them, he must add *prayer* to Him from whom the success cometh. For, not only to the ministry of the word, but to prayer, must he give himself. And he will soon find, that he must attend to both these parts of his work. And he will probably, be both grieved and astonished, to see so good a work, so little advantageous

geous to the souls of men. Yet, he must persevere, be patient, laborious, and in earnest. He must paint the pleasures of religion in their most alluring colours, to gain the deliberate and decided choice and preference of the heart. And the terms of the LORD may not be hidden from such as ungratefully and madly reject the tenders of mercy. If they will "reject the counsel of GOD against themselves," he will be pure, and their blood rest on their own heads. He is not, however, to leave them *suddenly*. He must instruct them in meekness and patience, and vary his addresses to them in wisdom and mercy, while hope remains. And when he finds any teachable and submissive, he must gladly aid them in the pursuit of truth, and motives of duty. He must assure them, that conscious integrity, peace with GOD, and hope of glory, are the christian's best portion on earth, and the best preparation for heaven. Faith and repentance, love to the ever-blessed GOD, and obedience to his wise laws, will always adorn their lives, render them useful in their day, and advance their meetness for full salvation. These duties of the christian bishop will abundantly employ his heart, and his head.

MANY, however, may think all this is but a small part of the *duty*, and the *burden* of the man of GOD. Most of this is a pleasant and sweet employ, carrying its reward with it. But the *superadded* labors and sorrows of the christian pastor, occasioned by the grand adversary of souls and his agents, are, perhaps, too numerous for any pen to recount; and which few, very few, without experience, will ever realize. To be opposed in our best works, to be disappointed in our most benevolent aims, to be loved the less, because we love much, to be made offenders for a word, to be called the friends of mammon while we are the servants of GOD, to be deemed hirelings, when, in great part, we eat our own bread in the sweat of our faces, to be reputed slothful, when we have spent our best time and strength in the service of the very people

who thus reproach us; to meet, I say, with these, or such like things, is to find something harder than all the proper and *direct* duties of the christian bishop. And, let me tell him, his lot will be uncommon, if he never experiences any thing of the kind. These trials call mightily for the *work* of our faith, the *labour* of our love, and the *patience* of our hope. We shall need vast labor with ourselves to keep alive within us all the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and with his spirit to instruct them that oppose themselves. And how much *superadded employment* will such enemies occasion for us! We may soon find ourselves at our very wit's end, while we labour to remove prejudice and mistake, malice and errors, from the minds of those, for whose salvation we daily labor, and devoutly pray. And, after all the labor, which wisdom and fidelity lead us to take, we may find our endeavours miscarry.

BUT, let the man of God be as free from such trials and new labors, as we can expect, still his duty is abundant, and his labor ever before him. He will probably find many *parents* in his charge, who neither adorn the gospel themselves, nor take due pains to train up their *children* for the service of their Redeemer. And youth, never taught by precept, or example, will grow up, God knows how ignorant, and how wicked! How much work will these afford the bishop, who, from his soul, longs and prays that he may see them walking in the truth! And, if a *wind* of doctrine should blow among them, how readily will they be driven before it, and cost him mighty pains to bring them back; if, peradventure, he can ever do it!

MOREOVER, to *guard his flock* against ungodliness, and infidelity, on the one hand, and against superstition, and the dreams of visionaries, on the other, will generally require great fidelity, and the wisdom of experience. And, in general, to warn every man, and teach every man, will enlarge his work abundantly, and make time precious.

AND

AND wisely to apply the divine *promises* and *threatnings* to the souls of men, is an hard and critical task. They are very prone to proceed fallily in this matter. *Humble* souls mourn and are full of fears, while their hearts are right with God: But the proud and *self-righteous* say, they are pure, before they are washed from their sins. The hand of a very skilful physician is here required; and if the patient do not esteem him also, the cure may never be effected. So *laborious* and *trying* is the station of a christian preacher and pastor! I suppose no other man can easily say to him, "I am able to put my soul in the place of yours, and feel all that you feel." But let not the man of God faint: His *consolations* are as peculiar, and as great, as are his labours and his sufferings. For,

2. His station is as excellent, as honourable and as important, as it is laborious. And He that ordains his work, is wise and munificent in his rewards. The worthy and excellent nature of the ministerial service may be inferred from the *titles* given to gospel-ministers; and from their *employment* itself. Are they not stewards of the mysteries of God, ambassadors for Christ, angels or messengers to the churches, overseers or bishops of Christ's flock, and workers together with God, watching for the welfare of immortal being? And their *employment* itself is of the most exalted, benevolent and godlike nature. They are, under Jesus, the divine shepherd, employed to destroy the works of the devil, to deliver souls from the power of darkness and sin, and to bring them to a kingdom of holiness and joy. To rectify the disorders which satan had made in God's moral kingdom on earth, and bring abundant glory to the Most High, and to make rebellious men his good subjects, are the grand ends of Christ the Saviour, of his gospel, and of his ministers. And the glory of the Supreme Ruler of the world, in its connexion with our righteousness and felicity, is so great an object, that no man on earth can pursue a greater. And this is the end which the christian bish-

op is so constantly and ardently to seek. To this he applies all the powers of his mind, with all its acquired furniture, both intellectual and moral. And never can these powers, and this furniture be better directed. For this grand object, for these vast and connected purposes, the Son of God left the glory of heaven, became a man, lived in labour, and died in agonies. For these he ascended on high, and at the Father's right hand still intercedes. In this work all the army of prophets, and the company of the apostles laboured. And to render it prosperous, the Holy Ghost came down from heaven. In short the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, in all its extensive and glorious nature, is the most grand and benevolent of all the works of the Deity himself, with which we are acquainted. In subserviency to this, the christian bishop labours. And if men, otherwise qualified, had a just sense and relish of moral and religious beauty, and beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ with delight, they would probably desire the office of a bishop, *by thousands*. For what labour can be so great, so benevolent, and of so mighty a tendency to bless the soul, employed in it? Before I finish this noble subject, take the sentiments of the devoutly pious PEARSCALL, in his *contemplations*. "Christ's ministers are fishers of men; and though their office, being only instrumental, falls infinitely short of his, yet if it bears the least analogy, the most distant resemblance, if in any, even the least sense, they may be said to *save themselves, and them that hear them*; I must and will *magnify their office*. I should not wonder, if I saw the eloquent orators of the bar, cast away their briefs to embrace the bible, yea, the most grave and reverend of our judges descend from their bench of judicature to ascend the pulpit, nay, I should not be amazed, if princes themselves should lay aside their sceptres, and become preachers of the gospel. In the patriarchal days, when the streams of wisdom, being nearer the fountain, were less muddled, the King and the Priest

were

were the same. I could inform those, whom the thought would perhaps make merry," of a preaching monarch. "I do not mean now HENRY III. preaching from the pulpit in *Canterbury*; nor ALFRED the Great, king of the *West Saxons*, who employed himself much this way; nor CONSTANTINE the Great, who thought it not beneath the imperial purple, to preach and pray in the christian assemblies; but a still greater than these, even SOLOMON. In his most mature age, when judgment was most ripe, when experience had strengthened it, he wrote a book, which he thus entitles: *The words of the preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem*. And so far is he from being ashamed of the pious character mingling with the royal, that he repeats it, *I the preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem*.

"A FISHER of men! Shall any be thought too laborious in such an employment? Can any be too anxious about the success? Can ministers be blamed if they cry aloud and spare not, if they lift up their voice like a trumpet? Or rather, do not they who are faithful, blame themselves, that their zeal is so little, when the occasion is so urgent?" I will add nothing to these streams of devout eloquence. Is not the work of a christian bishop good, excellent, benevolent, important, beyond comparison so? Then, *what shall I say?*

3. HE that truly desires it, is a good man, an excellent and godlike man.

MISTAKE me not. I do not by any means intend, that every one who desires to preach, or be in the place of a christian bishop, deserves so divine a character.—God forbid! A man may desire the *honour* of such a station, or the *living* annexed, as no doubt thousands have done, without a love to the *work* annexed. A man, disappointed in other business, or too indolent to labour with his hands, may crouch to one that has a right of presentation, and say, *put me into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread*. When the church affords large *livings* to her clergy, she may expect to be corrupted, as she often hath been, by the worst

worst of men, coming in crouds to her service. But, here the zeal is for *fat benefices*; and not for the *good work*, the benevolent employment of a christian bishop. And men, *ignorant* and *unprincipled*, void of all ministerial qualifications, neither prophets nor sons of prophets, may desire presumptuously to be teachers; not knowing what they say, nor understanding the things which they impiously affirm. Not sent by God, they run: but they do not, "They shall not profit the people at all." But, these things notwithstanding, he who truly *loves* the ministerial employment, is a very great and good character. It is here supposed, that he *understands* his duty, otherwise, he can not be said with propriety, either to desire it, or not. And understanding it, he cannot find an object of desire and love, without a *pure and benevolent heart*. Nothing less than the love of God and of man for God's sake, can make him chuse to spend and be spent, in the service of both. And as this is the noblest of all principles, so is it eminently *necessary* for a christian bishop. As this eminently exalts him, and makes him a great and good man: So the want of it leaves him one of the most vile, miserable, and wicked creatures in the world. Destitute of this, he will find his work an intolerable *burden*: not only as it is a *work*, and an hard one; but as it is *opposite* to the prevailing choice, and governing temper of his soul. He will scarcely do a ministerial duty, or think of his vows, and not find himself reprov'd, afflicted, tormented. The good Lord be merciful to all of us, who are under these solemn engagements; and make all afraid of haste in making them. But since the love of God is so necessary for a christian bishop, and all men, offering themselves to the service of the sanctuary, pretend to it, it is the safety of the CHURCH, that God hath given us, in various branches, the necessary qualifications of Christ's ministers. We can not judge of the heart of another man, intuitively, but by the fruits. By the *scriptural* qualifications of a minister then, we are solely to proceed.

These

These are our rule, and of this we may judge. By this every candidate for the ministry is to be tried. And since these are our only rule, left by a God of wisdom and mercy; we must believe they are sufficient for their design. And when a church, thus following her rule, and devoutly asking the divine blessing, gains her object, a pastor good and great, she is eminently blessed. She will have before her eyes, the charming picture, which she is to follow to glory and bliss. And from his lips will flow the melliferous streams of joy and salvation. And they will have a faithful friend and counsellor at all times, in sickness and health, prosperity and adversity; whose greatest joy will be to see them walking in the truth. *These are the blessings, the vast blessings of old, promised to the disciples; whose eyes shall see their teachers, their own teachers, fixed among them, and ever near and ready to help them.*

How gloriously different is this situation from that of God's people in ancient days, many of whom seldom saw a teaching priest! And also from the chosen lot of those in our times, whose vagrant teachers are fixed, *neither here nor there*; but roam for prey in all places, where mischief is to be done, and where sheep are to be scattered.

THE christian bishop, the evangelical pastor, "hath another spirit in him," and a more heavenly work before him. While his flock look up to him with joy and confidence, as to their teacher and best friend. He rejoices to instruct them, and to lead them in the paths of peace and righteousness. He is fixed in his post, a pastor of *one* flock; whose happiness is the end of his life, and the object of his prayers. In this department he finds abundant employment, which is his delight. For his labour is his choice, suited to his best feelings, and most devout desires. And his character, already great and good, morally so, so in the eyes of God and of angels, will still improve, till it is perfect in the world of love. He hath devoted his time and his soul to the most worthy and improving service.

And

And the end will be thus glorious. And he is in the hope also of having many souls, as the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord. He will be found to have had the true taste for solid glory and real greatness, when men and actions shall be weighed!

How ample and full of instruction would be the improvement of this subject.

When we consider the circumstances of our times, and the nature of men, in connection with our theme, we see also, in vivid colours, the wisdom and grace of Heaven, in giving to the church subordinate and *fixed pastors*: And the happiness of those churches who know them that are over them in the Lord, and esteem them highly in love for their works sake; and are at peace among themselves: And the great duty of christians to do their utmost to raise the office of a bishop to its deserved honour, for the want of which, the cause of the Redeemer does at this time, so eminently suffer:—And an *indelible blot* on the character of those, who imitate the most infamous character in its peculiar baseness, and “make priests of the lowest of the people.”—And the happiness of that good pastor who is over a teachable and peaceful flock; and also the blessedness of such a flock. To that man who possesses the spirit of christianity, and to that God who delights in peace and mercy, I know of no sight more pleasing beneath the realms of joy. Their mutual duties are done in love, and God smiles on their union and holiness; and delighted observers exclaim, “This is no other than the house of God, and the family of heaven.”

Let those christians, whose dreadful pleasure it is to *sink the gospel ministry*, remember, they are great enemies to God and to their own souls; and that the despisers of holy things and holy men, have been, and shall be, punished with chosen vengeance. Let my Brethren in the high and holy ministry, suffer me to say, it becometh us to take heed, and to maintain the fidelity of christian bishops.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

THIS address meets you with a peculiar propriety, and from an heart that feels for you. Shall I rejoice with you, or condole? Your work is abundant, and your trials may be heavy. But your labour is good, benevolent, godlike. I rejoice, that your temporal prospect is so pleasing. Prize it, principally, as it encourages your hope of uninterrupted employment in your office. We hope you have weighed your choice, examined your weakness, tried your inclination, felt your duty, and learned where wisdom and strength are to be found. But let me say freely and faithfully, you can never be too sure that you *love* your work, that the honor of God, and the salvation of souls possess and govern you. Never forget it, your happiness is not to be separated, cannot be separated from your duty. Leaving the latter, the former will forever fly from your eager embrace. What God and nature have joined no art or strength can put alunder. And hath he not ever placed our work before our reward, and made the one necessary and preparatory to the other? Fear not then too much service; nor indulge too little faith. *I am with you, always* should give superior joy to your heart, and fill it with zeal and activity. Hope of *success* also comes from this quarter. And how reviving will *this* be! To see improvement in nature is sweet to the eyes. The field and the garden, arising from the once uncultivated soil and the rugged wilderness, give pleasure to the mind. But when men, once defiled with sin and servants of corruption, shall rise to moral cleanness and beauty, and put on the garments of salvation, the feeling christian will find a nobler pleasure. To see such good fruit from the heavenly seed of the word will fill your soul with such consolation, as will lead you to look down, not with pride, but with indifference, on the most haughty monarch of the globe. How blest will these souls be! And how will they add to your crown! Let these thoughts make your work your pleasure, and fill

thy heart with joy. *Thine ever affectionate friend* *W. H. W.*

you with divine ambition, an ambition entirely consistent with all the humility of the gospel. Should you fail of this success, and yet be faithful, your work is with your God, and in his eyes you shall be glorious. You may not expect a total freedom from the *afflictions* of the ministry. All the pleasure, which your prospect gives you, enters our hearts also. We hope, your people are too *wise* to think your happiness and theirs run in different streams; and too *good* to add to your burdens. Their unanimity, and their love to you raise our hopes, animate our wishes, and give wings to our prayers. But are you not in the same world, and liable to be opposed by the same enemies, who have tried the fidelity and wisdom of other bishops? And you are putting the harness on. Put on indeed the whole armour of God, and expect the battles of the Lord. These weapons are not carnal, to use them well, be as wise as a serpent, and as harmless as a dove. Adorn your great character. Love your good work, and make full proof of your ministry. So shall the arrows of malice be blunted, and the reproaches of the wicked shall not cleave to you. Instruct in meekness all that oppose themselves; and pray for them that persecute you. Take your instructions from the fountain of wisdom and grace, and let the scriptures be your oracle. Bow your soul to God, that he may guide your sacred studies, give you to see, to feel, and to impart the unmixed truth. Let all your life prove to beholders, that you love your good work, while they see you an ornament in your office, and a blessing to men.

God be with thee, my Brother, and bless thee.— To show the temper of the gospel, be a *lamb*, and a *dove*. To suit the weeping saint, and to bless the hardy sinner, be a *Barnabas*, and a *Boanerges*. Be all things, but unfaithfulness, to all men; if you may save the more. Let that divine charity, which is the compendium and object of the religion of Jesus, be cultivated with peculiar care. Put this on, as your upper garment; not so as entirely to conceal your faith
and

and hope; but so as to appear first to the observer, as the most prized, most conspicuous, and most becoming part of your christian and episcopal dress. And, after you shall have worn it for length of days on earth, to your own exceeding benefit, and that of many others, may you appear in that alone in heaven, where faith and hope have no place.

BRETHREN IN CHRIST,

WE joy with you, seeing the prospect of settling a pastor over you in *perfect peace and union*, after you have so long been as sheep without a shepherd. The unanimity and liberality, with which you proceed in this very weighty business, are much to your honour. May God pour blessings down upon you a thousandfold, for the honour done to him by "your substance." May your expectations of peace with holiness, under the care of your chosen guide, be amply fulfilled.— That they may indeed be so, encourage him with all your hearts, that he may go through the arduous, yet pleasing duties of his great office. And be very diligent and prayerful to profit by them. Otherwise, ye act against yourselves, vainly expect miracles, and defeat your own intentions. *For sake not the Levite as long as thou livest. The labourer is worthy of his meat.* These are maxims of unchanging righteousness, and the truths of God. And your best interests are intimately connected with a sacred and pious regard to them. We rejoice, that *you* know it. We are grieved, that so many *others* treat them as idle fables, or arts of iniquity. For it is justly to be feared, that the office and the duty of some ministers are thus rendered in a manner useless. Of necessity they neglect a great part of their work, grow impatient and spiritless; and their people complain. Thus men, who love the ministry, and are apt to teach, lose their wishes, and mourn to see souls perishing in ignorance and sin.— And, instead of peace and holiness in such societies, envy and strife, wrath and contention, delusion and enthusiasm

enthusiasm are too common. And thus all this loss of good, and growth of evil may be owing, principally and originally, to the very unprofitable, though chosen neglect of the Levites. This subject, though ten times more important to the souls of men than many believe, is generally unpopular and unpleasing. We will close it in few words. We are glad, my brethren, that you can bear it. As your conduct, respecting it, is to *your praise*, we pray it may *profit others*. Forgive me, I beseech you, and bear with me in my Folly.—Will you persevere to teach your Fellow-Christians, that your minister is a *man, needing food and raiment*, to enable him, without distraction, to serve *you*? If they will learn this lesson of you, you will greatly serve the interests of God's kingdom below. For, I verily believe that scores of ministers in this land might be of *twice* the service in their office, if disentangled with the affairs of this life. For how can they labour in their *office*, and be at work for *daily bread* at the same time? And what *hope* can they have of winning to Christ souls that habitually and willingly think his institutions and commands are *grievous*, and love the *world* more than God? But I forbear. I wish to offend no man. If any are offended at the truth of Jesus, they are offended *in him*. As *his* servant, I have delivered *his* Truth. My brethren, your minister is to labour for *you*; and he ought to do so, and be faithful in his work. Sweeten his service among you.—Still *love* him. *Attend* with seriousness and prayer on his instructions. Receive them in love, and *practise* agreeably. Be kind to him, when *trouble* shall come upon him. And never *leave him*, in your persons or in your affections, till his life or his doctrines disagree with that faith and repentance, that love of God and obedience to Jesus, which make the christian, and adorn the gospel. In this course God will be with you and bless you; and your pastor must love you tenderly, count you “fellow-helpers to the truth.” And serve you day and night, and with all his heart. God
give

give you this, all this, true and real blessedness! *Treat your minister*, especially before your children and the rising generation, as a *man of God*, and their best friend. This will serve *them* exceedingly, and make *him* dis-
posed to act beneath his high, and most benevolent office. You may not think, on the other hand, how much injury you do your children, when they hear you despise him. The time of youth is very precious. Is it not the *moulding* age? Ask your reason, your observation, your bible. Will they not now imbibe the spirit of virtue and religion, or the spirit of the world? God and reason say, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he shall not depart from it." "I had almost said, he *can* not." On the reverse, train him up in sin, and you will probably have bitter cause to say, referring to *him*, and on some future and mourning day, "his own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the *cords* of his sins. He shall *die* without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."—Let then your beloved children, the fruit of your own bowels, and the most moving objects of your affections, and the daily subjects of your prayers, see that you prize the word of God, the ministers of God, and the day of God. So shall they reverence holy things, and believe, that all blessings come down from above. *For yourselves*, Attend diligently and prayerfully on all the ordinances of God, and use the appointed means of grace, *as means*, and as under God leading to the end, the purification of your souls. And God grant, that you may never rest short of it. May that Jesus, who holds the stars in his right hand, hold also your star, and for many days yet to come; and make you happy, walking in his light. "Finally, brethren, farewell: Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you."

To this assembly a word. You have seen the excellency and the kindness of the christian ministry. It

is an appointment, not of men, but of a God, and a God of boundless compassion. It is for your good, tending, in its design and nature, to prepare you for all the honour and felicity of which you are capable. The gospel is a joyful sound. The man of God brings you good tidings. He repeats in your ears the song of angels, which deserves all the gratitude of your souls. "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men." Therefore, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rejoice at the melting sounds of the divine love; but rejoice with trembling: For all do not receive and obey the gospel. And the obedient alone share its eternal blessings. Be in earnest, and pray always, that God would give you such a knowledge and such a *sense* of the gospel, as that it may prove his wisdom and power to your salvation, leading you to repentance, and obedience sincere. Walk in the light while it shines around you. Now is the accepted time; abuse it not, under the delusive hope of future repentance. God only knows where you will be to-morrow. Besides, that sin is exceedingly sinful, which the blind sinner commits, in preferring the service and the rewards of satan to those of God; and in being thus voluntary in departing *from* God for the present. What can quench that spirit more, on which this very sinner depends for his repentance and life? Trembling at such conduct, diligently improve your talents. And, in connexion with your other duties done, and other advantages regarded, hear and receive your ministers. And God grant that they may be to you all, not a saviour of death unto death, but of life unto life. Then shall ye join in the song of the redeemed: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

THE
C H A R G E,

BY THE REV. THOMAS BROWNE, OF
F A L M O U T H.

THE service to which you have devoted yourself, dear Sir, and for which you are now separated, in the primitive scriptural method, by prayer, with the imposition of hands, is of high and sacred importance. It is the work of the gospel ministry. The honour of God, the honour of the great Redeemer, the interest of his kingdom, and the everlasting happiness of men, are closely connected with it. The object of your appointment is, to *“turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them who are sanctified.”*

AND as a new and special relation is now formed, by mutual consent, between you and the church and people in this town, you are to consider them as particularly committed to your pastoral care—for whose *“souls you are to watch as one that must give account.”*

CHARITY, which thinketh no evil, induces us to hope and believe that you enter into the ministry with a pure intention, and under the influence of evangelical motives—that your heart's desire is, to promote the divine glory in the salvation of men—that *you take the oversight of this flock, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*

ALTHOUGH we claim no authority over you, for one is our master even Christ, and all we are brothers, yet in fidelity to this divine master, we admonish you to *take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, to fulfil it.*

THE gospel of JESUS CHRIST is now committed to your trust—a system of religion every way complete and perfect—needing no amendments, and incapable of receiving any from men, however great and good.

It

It contains that treasure of divine truths which you are to deliver to your people. From this you are to take your doctrines; and by this you are to be directed and governed in declaring the will of God, and in every branch of ministerial duty. Let it be your care, therefore, to obtain a thorough acquaintance with it.

SEARCH the scriptures with diligence and impartiality—with a mind open to the admission of divine truth—comparing spiritual things with spiritual—and imploring the gracious aid of the father of lights, that you may know what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and become a scribe well instructed to the kingdom of heaven.

Preach the word. Preach the gospel, in its purity and simplicity—unadorned with cunningly devised fables and subtil refinements. *Shun not to declare all the counsel of God. In doctrine shew uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, which cannot be condemned. Be instant in season, and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. Take heed to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. Study to shew your self approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Continue instant in prayer, to the God of all grace, for a divine influence and blessing to accompany your ministrations, that you may not run in vain, nor labour in vain.

ADMINISTER the ordinances of the gospel and preside in the church, according to the directions of holy scripture, and with a view to the advancement of the interest of Christ's kingdom.

Lay hands suddenly on no man. When ever you are called to this service, be careful to introduce into the ministry, *faithful men who shall be able to teach others.*

WHILST you are aiming to make full proof of your ministry, and using your best endeavours to promote the good success of the gospel among your people; be solicitous to become a partaker in the blessed effects of it with them. Let your heart be right with God,
and

and maintain in your mind a holy concern, lest after having preached to others, you yourself should be a castaway.

LET your whole life be instructive and exemplary—conformed to the rules of the gospel—and free from every thing which has a tendency to obstruct your usefulness, or bring a reproach upon the christian religion. *Be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven.*

WE wish you happy, Sir, in the esteem and affection of a kind, friendly, and generous people, whose attachment to you will not be easily shaken, or suddenly withdrawn. But your lot will be singular indeed, if you should never be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel—if your faithful councils and admonitions should meet with no unchristian resentment, from any, if you should have no trouble, from the ignorant and unstable, from unquiet spirits, and men of corrupt minds.

UNDER such trials, you will need the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove. Instruct with meekness and patience—be faithful in the discharge of duty, enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. “Seek the esteem and friendship of all; but never, to the violation of a good conscience, or the prostitution of your sacred office.”

Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Let your dependence for wisdom, fortitude, meekness, patience—for every gracious quality and endowment be upon him, *in whom all fulness dwells*, and who hath said to his ministers, *lo I am with you always even to the end of the world.*

EVER bear it in mind, that you are responsible to a master in heaven—the Lord, the righteous Judge, who, at the appointed time, will come to take account of his servants. If you should obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful, and continue so to the end, you will hear from his mouth that sentence of approbation and applause which will introduce you to joys unspeakable and full of glory—*Well done thou good and faithful servant—thou hast been faithful—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY REV. SAMUEL EATON, OF

HARPSWELL.

WHEN our blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men, not only prophets, evangelists and apostles, but pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the perfecting of Saints, and for the edifying his mystical body the church, 'till we come in the unity of the faith, to the knowledge of the son of God, and to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

THE primitive Church we often speak of, appeal to, and profess to copy after. Now there are two things which the first christians were remarkable for, viz. their constant attendance upon divine ordinances, and their care to keep the communion of saints: and in both these, 'tis our duty to follow their example.

EVERY single person that is a *real* christian, lives a life of communion, not only with God the father, son and holy ghost, but with all that are godly in Christ; for all such have benefit of the same ordinances, partake of the same promises, are led by the same spirit, receive life from the same root, and hold the same head.

AND as particular christians, so churches should live in communion with one another, by mutual care, and by publicly acknowledging each others ministers (when regularly called to the sacred office) to be true ministers: And the last of these I take to be one thing mainly intended by the ceremony of giving the right hand of fellowship to one who is set apart for the work of the ministry.

AND

And as you, Sir, have taken upon you the charge of this dear flock, have now in a regular and solemn manner been introduced into the sacred office of the ministry, by prayer with imposition of hands, and as the only thing remaining to compleat the present solemnity is to give the right hand of fellowship, I do now in the name, and at the desire of this venerable ecclesiastical council declare, that, being satisfied with your qualifications for the ministerial work, we cordially concur with the choice which this church and congregation have made of you to be their pastor, in token of which, I give you my *right hand*.

So James, Cephas and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, to signify that they owned them to be true ministers of Jesus Christ. In like manner we acknowledge you to be a partner with us in the ministry, and welcome you into the vineyard of the Lord of hosts. And as we shall ever be ready to give you our best advice when needed and asked, so we shall expect the like favour from you and this church. And if these are your sentiments, please to give me your right hand.

You are called to the pastoral office in a difficult day—but let none of the trials you may meet with discourage you, but lead you to the rock that is higher than all. The grace of Christ is sufficient for us and you; for greater is he that is for us, than all who are, or can be against us.

HERE then, my dear brother, we leave you to stand and labour in your lot, till the end of the days appointed for you. God prolong your life, and render it precious to the people of your charge. May the ear that hears you bless you, and the eye that sees you bear witness to you. May he that holds the stars in his right hand, guide you in a shining course of personal sanctity and publick usefulness here, and finally bring you to the enjoyment of those pleasures which flow at God's right hand forever.

I have

I have a short word to add to the church and Christian society in this place.

Dearly beloved, partakers of the heavenly calling.

United by the bond of love, we rejoice that the sun has risen upon your horizon, that you have this day a pastor set over you. We salute you much in the Lord. Receive him as a precious gift of our ascended Saviour. Esteem him very highly in love for his works sake. Attend upon his ministry—carry him in your prayers to the throne of grace—and if there be any consolation in Christ, fellowship of the spirit and comfort of love, endeavour to be of one accord, of one mind.

AND now may the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

